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ABSTRACT

The main conclusions of a study on the development of concerns of student teachers during the preservice period of teacher training are presented. Data for the study were gathered by weekly log-book entries and interviews with the trainees. Tapes of the interviews combined with the weekly log-book entries provided two different sources for analysis. In analyzing the data, one unit of specific concern was identified and prototypic sentences were combined from tape transcriptions and log-book entries. The first of these sentences contained the most general description of the concern. Four possible categories were discerned: concerns related to being a student, self-concerns, task-concerns, and pupil-concerns. The evolution of these concerns over the course of 3 years of training is traced graphically. Proposals for improving existing teacher training include the recommendation that the student's concerns should be the starting point for the choice and sequencing of different training activities. JD)

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Concerns of student teachers: development during the pre-service period

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1. Purpose and design of the study

In this paper we present the main conclusions of a study on the development of concerns of student teachers during the pre-service period (three years) (see Brouns, 1988 for a more detailed presentation of the results).

The education of teachers for the first three years of secondary school in Belgium takes three years. It takes place in a teacher training college, which is part of the so-called non-university higher education. During the schoolyear 1986-87 fifteen students have been followed, five of each training year, which means that a cross-sectional research design guided our study.

The participating trainees had to complete each week one page of a logbook which was specially designed for this study (see Appendix). On each page they had to describe the concerns they had at that time with respect to their experiences as a student teacher. These descriptions were immediately transmitted to the researcher. Thus was prevented that the students still had pages of the past week at their disposal when they had already to complete a new one. By working in that way, "contamination" from the one week to another was reduced to a minimum.

After about six weeks, in principle after each half term, the participants were interviewed. Before the interview, the researcher analysed the logbook of the concerning student. During the interview he asked the student for more information about his concerns as described in the logbook. This could be an explanation of what was written down, but it provided also information about the context wherein a certain concern had arisen or about the situational factors connected with the origin of the concern. Examples are for instance the fact that the student has to give a lesson for the first time, the nature of the feedback he receives after a training activity or the discussion on theoretical issues during his classes at the teacher college. When additional concerns were spontaneously expressed during the interview, they also were registrated.

So, logbook-data and interview-data were considered as complementary, as was the case within a similar study about the concerns of beginning teachers (Janssens, 1987). Our first purpose was a detailed exploration of the concerns. An interview is hereto extremely efficient. But we were also interested in the development of those concerns. Therefore we needed a frequent and regular registration. In that case interviews were less appropriate, because of the very time-consuming nature of an interview. A logbook obviously presents advantages in this respect. Furthermore, during the interview a student can be confronted with what he wrote earlier in the logbook. This can contribute to the validity of the data in that logbook.

The selection of the student teachers for this study was done, based on practical criteria. We contacted a teacher training college in the Leuven area. For each training year, five volunteers were chosen, who comitted themselves to participate for the whole schoolyear. The fact that all subjects were at the same college, clearly had advantages for the interpretation of the collected data. The researcher contacted this school regularly and was very well informed about the state of affairs there. When a student, in the logbook or during the interview, referred to elements in relation to this situation, the researcher was immediately able to understand the information correctly. Moreover, time-consuming transfers for the interviews were thus avoided. And we could immediately contact a student whenever needed (for instance, when a paper for the logbook hadn't been handed in on time or when an appointment for an interview had to be changed).

2. Construction of prototype-sentences: analysis of the data

The interviews were registrated on tape and were later on completely written out. This means that two different written sources were available for further analysis: the logbooks and the texts from the interviews. As in the research about the concerns of beginning teachers, the information from both sources was translated into so-called prototype-sentences.

The first step hereto was the definition of the units of analysis. In our case, the unit of analysis was one specific concern. This unit can correspond with a whole sentence out of the logbook, or with a part of a sentence, or with a combination of sentences. Passages that were not an expression of a concern, but containing information about the context wherein a concern originated or about the factors in relation to this origin, were not transformed into prototype-sentences.

Starting point was not only the literal formulation of the concerns in the logbook or during the interview. In the already mentioned study about concerns of beginning teachers, we acquired the experience that these formulations often were a superficial expression of what the beginning teachers really wanted to communicate. This was also the case now. An example will illustrate this. In his logbook a student wrote that he was concerned about how to deal with pupils who have finished their work earlier than the others. In the beginning of the interview, this student said he needed suggestions about what and how to do in this situation. Later on it became clearly that in fact he was afraid that he couldn't hold those pupils under control. This concern, which has to do with the student's anxiety, was originally formulated as a question

for technical advise. In a similar way, appearant concerns about the consequences for the pupils of what is done, can be a disguise of real concerns about the student's own person or his task as a teacher.

We used an interpretative method to make it possible for the researcher to catch as near as possible the essence of each concern. Hereto the literal formulations of concerns were interpreted taking into account the explanation the student gave during the interview and the available information about the circumstances wherein a concern originated, or about the factors related to it. It is important that the researcher himself thus acquired insight in the specific situation of the school and builded a personal relation with the student.This permit him to better understand the expressions of concerns of the students, so to say from inside, and to give them an adequate standardized formulation in a prototype-sentence.

How does such a prototype-sentence look like ? It consists of a number of "sentence-elements" which, from beginning to end, are meant to specify the expressed concern. There was no limit as far as the number of the sentence- elements is concerned. Which (sentence-)elements occur in a prototype- sentence, and in what sequence was decided a posteriori. The construction of prototype-sentences was the result of repeated attempts to order the collected data in an adequate way.

The first sentence-element of each prototype-sentence contains the most general description of the concern. Four possible categories were discerned: concerns related to being a student, self-concerns, task-concerns and pupil- concerns. This classification is in accordance with the distinctions described in Frances Fuller's work (1969). Analysing our data we came to the conclusion that her classification fitted well for the concerns found in this study.

Concerns related to being a student correspond with Fuller's "non-concerns" (1969, 1970). It actually isn't about concerns regarding the experiences as a teacher. The concerns of this category are more concerned with being a student in a training institution: they have to do with the organization of classes, critic on the lesson contents, the exams, etc. The three remaining categories are the well-known distinction between self-, task- and pupil-concerns which is made in many studies on teacher development.

The interpretative method allowed us to discover that in some cases, where the student expressed a task-concern at first sight, it actually was a self-concern. An example will clarify this. One of the students wrote in his logbook: "during the preparation of a lesson about the 'medieval city' I have selected a few slides with representations of maps. Was that a good choice ?" When, during the interview, this was discussed, it appeared that the student then felt uncertain because he didn't know which demands his training-mentor would make about representations used in a lesson. As he was to be judged upon this lesson, he wanted to avoid a bad choice. In this light is the sentence in the logbook referring to a self-concern and clearly not to a task-concern.

The second, third and fourth parts of a prototype-sentence form a progressive specification of the information in the first sentence-element. This means that the combination of the first sentence-element with the second is a more specific description of the concern. The combination of the first, second and third sentence-elements contains a more complete description than only the first and second together.

To illustrate we go back to the above-cited example. As demonstrated, this example dealt with a self-concern. This first part of the prototype-sentence contains a general description of the concern expressed by the student. In the second sentence-element is added that this concern is related to a "didactical aspect". The combination of the first sentence-element with the second leads to a more concrete description of the regarding concern. When the third sentence-element is joined to this, the description becomes even more concrete. Therein is namely specified that it goes about the preparation of lessons. The same is thru, when the fourth sentence-element is added, wherein is stated that this concern regards the didactical material. In summary, the first four elements of the concrete prototype-sentence for this concern are: self - didactical aspects - preparation of lessons - didactical material.

Because of the use of prototype-sentences, concerns are always formulated in the same way and equal formulations refer to equal concerns. As already mentioned, this correspondance between the content of the expressed concern and the way in which it is formulated is surely not present in what has been written in the logbooks or has been said during the interviews. This correspondance made it possible to process the collected data on a micro-computer. A data base made up of all prototype-sentences has been created.

One more point needs to be clarified about this procedure: it is essential that the transposition of each concern in a prototype-sentence should be valid and reliable. "Validity" in this context means that each prototype-sentence has to be an adequate representation of the concern which is present to the student-teacher. To make this possible, it is essential that the researcher himself, who has studied the logbooks and taken the interviews, worked on the development of the prototype-sentences. Only he had the acquaintance with the student and the situation in the train-

ing institute which is essential to achieve a high validity.

For that reason, it was not possible - in terms of controlling reliability of the transformations into prototype-sentences - to put two persons separately on to this work and then check out if the results are similar. On the other hand, there was a heavy emphasis on achieving high reliability and consensus.

Therefore a section taken from one of the logbooks and interviews was discussed with three graduate students who were working on a similar topic. Taking into account all the additional data that the person working on this study could provide, all concerns from this section were transcribed into prototype-sentences. Then, different options were discussed till a consensus had been achieved. This procedure was repeated with different sections till the members of the group came relatively quickly to identical transpositions. A set of rules was built, which guided the development of the prototype-sentences. In this way, we guaranteed that each researcher worked always in the same way and differences from one researcher to another were reduced to a minimum.

3. Concerns of student teachers

Two questions guided the analysis of the data:
(1) which (educational) concerns do student teachers have during their training ?
(2) is there an evolution in these concerns ?

In order to answer the first question, it was examined how often the students participating in the study expressed concerns as a student and self-, task- and pupil-concerns. The results, based on the first sentence element, are given in table 1.

Table 1. The relative frequencies of the four categories of the first sentence-element

variants	relative frequencies
concerns as a student	33%
self-concerns	54%
task-concerns	10%
pupil-concerns	1%

The results indicate that the students in this study had many concerns as a student (33%). As already mentioned, these concerns have to do with the organization of classes, critic on the lesson contents, the exams they have to undergo, etc. As they don't concern the experiences as a teacher, we won't go further into this. Since, we were in the first place interested in concerns related to "teaching", we will pay more attention to the next three categories of concerns.

More than half of the expressed concerns are self-concerns (54%). The percentage of task-concerns is quite below that (10%) and pupil-concerns hardly never occur (only 1%). These findings are in line with Fuller's results: she followed student teachers during their training and during the first years of their profession (a five-years period). In the beginning, they mostly expressed self-concerns. These decreased after a while and task-concerns were put forward. Even later these on their turn made place for pupil-concerns. The picture in our research shows a similarity with the first "stage" of this described evolution. It should be mentioned that the results of our earlier study about the concerns of beginning teachers (Janssens, 1987) also show the same patterns. During the first year of their career, teachers especially expressed task-concerns. This corresponds to the second "stage" of the development, as described by Fuller.

To obtain a more detailed picture of the concerns of student teachers, the three first sentence-elements of the prototype-sentences were combined. Thus twenty-five categories were formed. Table 2 enumerates these categories, indicating the part of each category in the total amount of concerns.

99,4% of all the concerns found in this study could be situated in one of these twenty-five categories. As far as pupil-concerns are concerned, no further distinctions were introduced, because of their low relative frequency.

Some categories appear both as self- and task-concerns: discipline, preparation of lessons, pupil's entering behavior, teaching methods. It should be obvious, after what has been explained, that there are clear differences between these categories. When they appear as self-concerns the student's person is the central focus: they have to do with feelings of insecurity, anxiety, etc. When they belong to task-concerns, they are related to the "how" and "what" of some activities: questions for advice about discipline, preparation of lessons, etc.

4. Development in the concerns of student teachers

As mentioned before, Fuller found an evolution in the concerns of student- teachers during their training and during the first years of their career (Fuller & Bown, 1975). We traced if such an evolution is also applicable for the subjects in our study.

A problem arose with which we had already been confronted in our study about concerns of beginning teachers. The number of concerns the subjects formulated in their logbook or during the interviews, was

Table 2. The twenty-five most important categories of concerns and their part in the total amount of concerns

sentence-element 1	sentence-element 2	sentence-element 3
concerns as a student (33%)		
self-concerns (54%)	organization of the training (14%)	amount of work (3%)
		practical problems (8%)
		lack of time (3%)
	self as a teacher (17%)	interactions with pupils (5%)
		fear of failure (4%)
		newness of the situation (2%)
		identity as a teacher (2%)
		fysical problems (3%)
	didactical aspects (12%)	pupil's entering behavior (2%)
		teaching methods (2%)
		preparation of lessons (4%)
		discipline (4%)
	evaluation of the training (9%)	anxiety (2%)
		evaluation system (2%)
		difference of opinion (4%)
	relational aspects (2%)	
task-concerns (10%)	pupil's entering behavior (2%)	
	teaching methods (3%)	
	perparation of lessons (3%)	didactical materials (1%)
		background information (1%)
		timing (1%)
		other aspects (1%)
	discipline (2%)	
pupil-concerns (1%)		

rather high in the beginning, then decreasing towards the end of the observation period. This could give a misleading representation: for most categories we should perhaps notice a decline to the end of each year, even when the relative frequency increases during the schoolyear.

To correct this, we took the relative frequency of each category of concerns in relation to the total amount of concerns during a half term. The relative frequencies were calculated separately for each training year, as three different groups of participants were investigated. The division in two half terms is roughly in accordance with the time between two interviews. The third term wasn't divided because it turned out to be much shorter than the two first terms and because an important part of it was taken up by examinations. The disadvantage of this correction is that the part of each separate concern is higher near the end of the schoolyear. Small nuances in the formulations by the students or an inaccurate translation into prototype-sentences could then have relative important consequences for the results of the study.

Figure 1 is the representation of the observed development in the four categories of concerns related to the first part of the prototype-sentences. The horizontal axe represents the division in half terms for each training year. On the vertical axe figures the relative frequency of each category in relation to the total amount of expressed concerns. The full line, the dash-point-dash line, the dashed line and the pointed line correspond with the relative frequency of resp. the concerns as a student, the self-concerns, the task-concerns and the pupil-concerns.

The concerns as a student take an important place in all three training years. Two "peaks" in figure 1 demand more attention. The relative frequency of the concerns as a student is remarkably high in the fourth half term of the third training yar (95%). In the explanation the students gave during the interview, it appears that in that period of time they had to finish a paper. The evaluation of this paper plays an important role in the final evaluation.

In that same period the relative frequencies of the self-concerns and of the task-concerns are quite low in comparison with the other half terms. Perhaps this has to do with the way of representation: an important

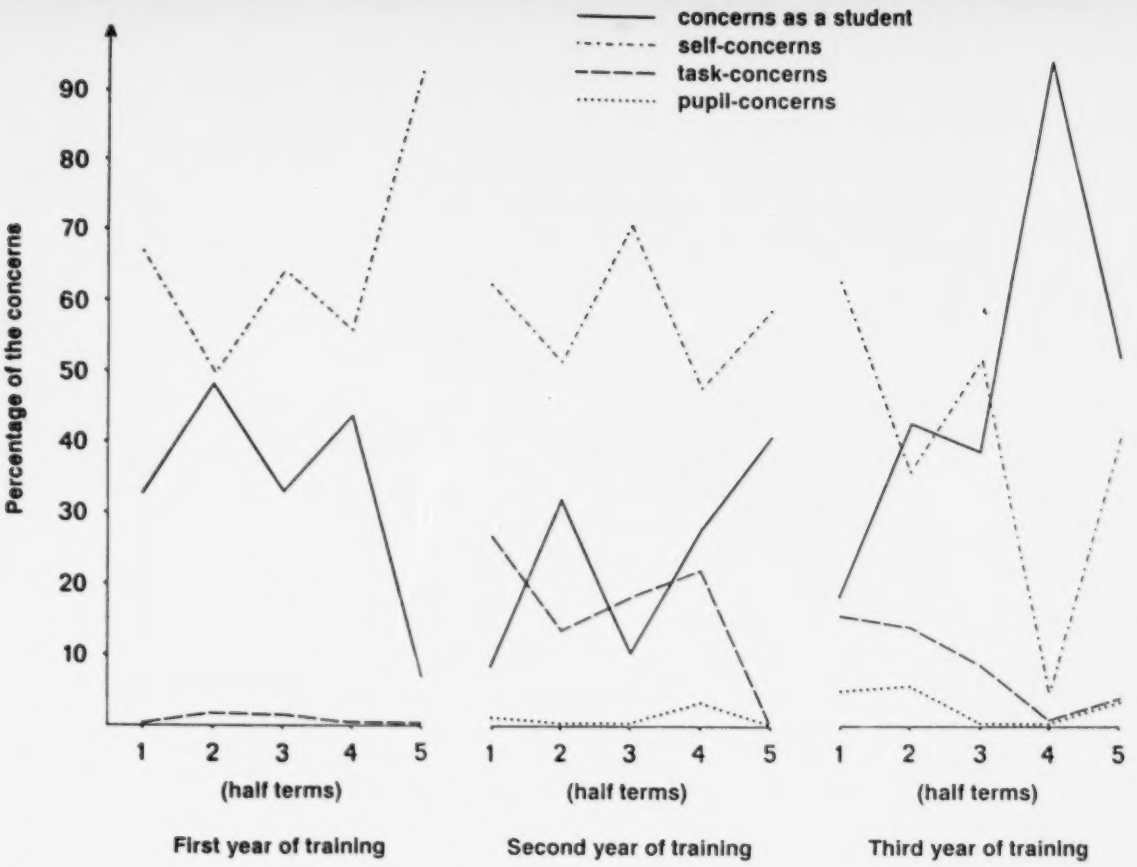

Figure 1. The evolution of the four categories of concerns related to the first element of the prototype-sentences.

increase of the one sort of concerns leads "automatically" to a decrease of another, as we worked with relative frequencies per half term and per training year. We found the same phenomenon in the fifth half term of the first training year. The decline in concerns as a student is in relation to the peak of the self-concerns.

Of those categories related to teaching activities, is the relative frequency of the self-concerns the highest in each half term of the three training years. This is in line with Fuller's findings. Making abstraction of the fact that three groups of students were examined, we even establish a gradual decrease of these self-concerns during the three training years.

The peak in the fifth half term of the first year can be explained by looking at the information in the interviews. In the school where we did our study, a mextensive period of training is for the first time organized after Easter holiday. The students are then for the first time clearly and for a longer period confronted with their future career as a teacher. A similar phenomenon occurs in the last half term of the third training year. The students then have to go on training in a school for special education, which seems to increase their anxiety.

The part of the task-concerns is rather small in each half term of the first training year: less than 2%. In the second year it is remarkably higher: between 14 and 27%, except for the last half term wherein task-concerns don't appear. In the third year, the relative frequency is lower than in the second year, but still higher than in the first. For the first three half terms the frequency amounts to between 8 and 16%. The complete absence of it (also in absolute figures) in the fourth half term, has perhaps to do with the attention given to the paper. And during that period there is no specific teaching training. They do organize a training period in the fifth half term though, but as was mentioned before, in a school for special education and this leads much more to self-concerns than to task-concerns.

The fact that the amount of task-concerns is quite small in the first year and higher in the second is in accordance with Fuller's findings. Not so much for the decline in the third year, but this has probably to do with the fact that the students' time is more taken up to function as student during that year. This can be caused by factors related to the education, such as the paper and the examinations. Because we worked with three separate groups, it is also possible that those students already show more student-concerns from the very beginning of their training or that they react upon their training with other concerns than second-years. The relative frequency of the pupil-concerns is

very low. In the first training year even no occurence was found and in the second year they only appear in the first and fourth half term, but for only 2%. In the third year pupil-concerns figure in the first, the second and the fifth half term: the relative frequency amounts to resp. 4,7, 5,7 and 3,4%. This observation is again in line with Fuller's findings: as the training progresses, the share of pupil-concerns increases, although a big increase can only be expected after the training.

5. Conclusions

The results of this research allow us to formulate a few proposals to improve the existing teacher training. These proposals correspond to what Fuller called a "personalized training". This includes that the person of the student, especially his concerns, should be the starting point for the choice and the sequencing of the different training activities.

When it is observed that students in the beginning of their training especially express self-concerns, one should take this into consideration. This could mean that the students should be confronted at that moment, much earlier than in the present organization of the training, with their future job as a teacher. The support of these activities should especially stimulate personal exploration. In the present teacher training this support consists mostly of judgments and indications about what should happen and how. A student with strong self-concerns can interprete this as a rejection of what he does, which enhances even more his self-concerns. Instead of stimulating the evolution of the student, it is counteracted. In our study we observed for instance that students remain with many self-concerns at the end of their training.

It is only when a student feel less self-concerned, that he or she is open for indications about what he should do and how. This implies another level of operation, which is characterized by more "rationality". The observation that students mostly express self-concerns at the end of their training, indicates that they (or at least a large amount of them) never reach this "rational" level during their training. This can mean that indications for good teaching, as given today, are never integrated in their teaching repertoire.

Pupil-concerns suppose an even higher level of functioning, that can only be achieved when the task-concerns are more or less solved. Although it is not certain this level can be reached by most students during the training, it remains possible to stimulate the evolution in this direction, by taking into consideration the self- and task-concerns.

The preceeding discussion has important consequences for the organization of the teacher training. We already referred to the desirability of an earlier contact with the future job. As it is now, most training schools start only at the end of the first year to organize some teaching activities. Also should the coaching for these activities be more differentiated compared to how it is now often done. Students should for example receive a different feedback according to the type of concerns they express. This demands a different approach depending on the student and an evolution in this approach keeping pace with the evolution of each student.

It is also probable that the choice and sequencing of the contents for the theoretical classes can better be adapted to what is here proposed. The realization of this seems in any case to suppose leaving the idea that training should start with offering knowledge before practical teaching activities being the application of this knowledge. A personalized training seems easier to realize in a cyclic course. A first exploration of the future job can lead to questions which can be analyzed and discussed during classes. The results of this discussions can be tested in a practical activity. New problems might probably arise as a result of this confrontation, which can get a chance in further discussions and theoretical courses, etc.

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7. Appendix

A logbook page:

Name:
Year: Date:

Note here your concerns at this moment	Don't write here
My problem is: how do I best arrange my lesson? In other words, when do the pupils have to listen and when do they have to write down ? Do they have to listen first and then note or do they have to do both at the same time?	
My mentor says I shouldn't wait till the weak students also understand everything, because of the volume of the curriculum. What's most important: finishing the curriculum or helping all pupils to understand what I'm teaching?	